

Minutes of Public Works Committee
Tuesday, November 13, 2007
7:15 p.m.

Present: Guilford Mooring, Director of Public Works; Committee members Rob Crowner (Chair), Don George, Charlie Moran, Stephen Braun, Vincent O'Connor, and Michael Cann.

Agenda review

Mr. O'Connor handed out the minutes for the September, 2007 meeting and members reviewed. A motion was made to accept the minutes with revisions to the second paragraph of the Larkspur Drive discussion to make it consistent with the memo written by Mr. Crowner to the Select Board regarding this matter. Mr. Braun agreed to digitize and revise the minutes accordingly and to fix various typos identified by committee members.

The motion to accept the minutes, as modified, was approved unanimously.

The minutes for the October, 2007 meeting will be reviewed at the next meeting to allow Mr. O'Connor time to review.

Minutes of the July meeting were reviewed and approved 5-0, Mr. O'Connor abstaining.

New Business

University Drive Improvements

A motion was made by Mr. Moran to recommend to the Select Board that the Big Y intersection portion of the University Drive Improvement proposal be begun as soon as possible per the designs presented by Stantec, leaving for later consideration other aspects of the project. The area in question is bounded on the north by the entrance to the extended care facility, and on the south by Rt. 9.

Mr. O'Connor made an alternative motion to recommend the same thing except for installation of a traffic light at the entrance to the Big Y parking lot. Mr. O'Connor stated that he fears a traffic light there will slow traffic flow and deter drivers from using University Avenue, prompting them to use other "cut through" streets to UMass such as Lincoln Avenue and Sunset St. Mr. O'Connor also suggested posting of signs to direct westbound traffic from Amherst Center on Rt. 9 to the service road just past China Diner. This would discourage people from turning right onto University and then left into Big Y, thus reducing overall traffic volume in that section of University Drive.

Both proposals were discussed at length. After hearing comments on a portion of his proposal for signage that would direct eastbound traffic on Rt. 9 to make a U-turn at the

University Drive intersection, thus allowing them to use the side service road off of Rt. 9, Mr. O'Connor agreed to drop that component as unrealistic and, instead, proposed three signs on Rt. 9 directing traffic onto the service road; one on Rt. 9 on east side of University Avenue; and one on the island across from Snell St.

Mr. Mooring stated that he does not believe the proposed traffic light at the Big Y entrance would have the effect that Mr. O'Connor envisions. He also stated that the owner of Big Y has agreed to pay for the parts of project that lie on his land and to cede some portions of land to the town to facilitate construction. Mr. Mooring estimated the Big Y portion of the overall project to cost the town approximately \$100,000, which includes the traffic light, which costs roughly \$30,000. If approved by the Select Board, he noted that this money would come from existing revenues and would, therefore, mean diversion from some other (unspecified) planned project.

After further discussion, Mr. O'Connor agreed to make a separate motion on his directional signage proposal. The vote on the motion was 3 for, 3 against, hence the motion failed.

Discussion returned to Mr. Moran's original motion. Following discussion the vote was taken and the motion was approved 4-2. Since this motion included the traffic light that was the issue of contention in Mr. O'Connor's motion, he agreed to drop his motion as it was now moot.

Amity St./University Drive Intersection

The Committee discussed the proposals for the Amity St./University Drive intersection. Several members declared their opposition to the roundabout option, citing uncertainties of efficacy and unknown effects of the crossing of the roundabout by the bicycle/pedestrian way. There was general consensus that this intersection is dysfunctional in most (but not all) directions, particularly at peak times of outflow from UMass.

Mr. Braun made a motion to recommend to the Select Board that work on the Amity St./University Drive intersection proceed for the design and other preparatory work consistent with the signalized intersection design presented in the Stantec Proposal. This design would expand the intersection with multiple additional turning lanes to facilitate more efficient through-put of vehicles.

The motion was approved 5-1.

Origin and destination study

Mr. O'Connor raised the issue of the need for good data about the origin and destination of vehicles driving on University Avenue. Although data exist for the intersection of Rt. 9 and University Drive, according to Mr. Mooring, no data exist elsewhere in the corridor. There was discussion about the feasibility of such a study. Mr. Mooring noted

that his department typically conducts observational studies of cars traveling or turning. Mr. O'Connor said this would be inadequate to obtain the necessary information and what was needed, instead, was a study in which cars were randomly stopped (or approached when already stopped) and the drivers asked where they had just come from and where they were headed.

Mr. Moran noted that such data could be helpful because the two design alternatives in the Stantec proposal assume two different visions of the University Avenue corridor: as a traffic conduit (the signalized, multi-lane version); and as a "destination" or modified "town center" (the "boulevard" version).

After further discussion the motion was approved 5-1.

Two items of new business, a bench at the Jones Library bus stop and traffic calming signs on Gatehouse Road, were deleted from the agenda as outside the purview of the Committee. Other agenda items, such as parking on High Street, sidewalks, and street repaving were deferred until the following meeting.

Mr. Crowner urged Committee members to visit the area in the town center that may be the focus of a proposal for the extension of Tyler Place, which would involve the acquisition of Tyler Place itself, which is now privately owned, and might involve additional land for a right-of-way for the extension that would connect Tyler Place to Kellogg Avenue.

Mr. O'Connor made a renewed plea to members to reconsider their vote on his directional sign proposal. Mr. Braun supported such reconsideration.

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 p.m. Next meeting to take place at 7 p.m., December 4, location to be determined.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Braun